As a teacher, I have observed students in my classes being so engrossed and absorbed in what they are doing that they do not notice the time that is passing. When I hear someone say, ‘Oh, we are already done!’ or ‘The class is already over?’, this is an indication to me that they have not been aware of the time as it was passing. It is precisely this unawareness of time passing that we attempt to capture by using the construction of the verb ‘to be’ with the past participle of the verbs ‘engross’ or ‘absorb’. We can think of the students to be in a state where they do something, like conducting a science investigation but where they are not aware of the situation as such. They are absorbed in the situation and do not objectify and think about time – which they do when they are not absorbed and wish some lesson to be over. I remember times during my middle school years when I looked at the second hand of the clock on the wall behind the teacher and the lesson appeared to be interminable. Similarly, the afternoons of Christmas Eve, the hours before receiving our gifts, turned out to be interminable and I could never actually fall asleep to take the nap that my parents had ordered us to take.

Research generally might short-shrift the phenomenon by suggesting that the students engrossed in the science activities ‘are (self-) motivated’ and leave it at that; and researchers might describe me as an unmotivated student who was not interested in the lesson but who was hoping it would pass by watching the passing of time on the clock. The problem is that the very conceptualizing of knowing and learning as a conscious activity prevents us from thinking (about, of) those situations where students most and best do what we desire them to do: fully engage with the task designed to let them learn. Moreover, impossible in a state like this are all the attributes some psychologists want from students: self-awareness of themselves as learners. That is, not only are students supposed to be engaging in making thematic the learning object but also their own learning (process). All the ideas about meta-cognition and its importance as strategy for learning are based on the notion of making present to oneself the activity of thinking (cognition). But when I am engrossed in something I cannot inherently make present to myself the engrossment, because this would mean that I am aware of my engrossment, which
would precisely stop the engrossment. We already encounter a similar phenomenon in chapter 3, while investigating touch, which shows that we are intentionally oriented either to the hand touching the mouse pad or to the hand touching the hand that is touching. We may also orient our intentional effort toward the feeling of the object or on the relief that the object touched is providing to the itching part of our skin. That is, the very way in which many learning scientists think (about, of) and theorize learning covers up an issue that should be of the most interest to us: the relation of presence and its difference from the presence of the present. In this chapter, I exhibit first-person methods by investigating presence and Being (Sein, être) and their relation to representation and beings (Seiendes, étant).

**Being Absorbed**

There are many instances in my daily life when I am completely absorbed in something. I am so completely involved that the personal pronoun ‘I’ and its pronominal forms ‘my’, ‘mine’, and ‘me’ no longer exist in the experience. In fact, I am not just absorbed on occasion but take it as an attitude: I deliberately allow myself to be absorbed. It is an attitude to life characteristic of Zen, which aims at presence rather than the making present of the presence. I do so across many, very different aspects of my daily life:

- ‘I’ am riding the bicycle for quite some time already and all of a sudden realize that a period of time has gone without ‘my’ ‘noticing’ ‘the environs’ or ‘the time’ ‘passing’ – ‘I’ can provoke the falling away of presence by focusing, for example, on the repetitive movement of my legs and feet pushing on the pedals;
- I have gone into the garden to weed. I pull a weed, pull a weed, pull a weed . . . and all of a sudden I realize that two hours have passed without ‘my’ ‘noticing’ the situation, that ‘I’ ‘have been pulling’ ‘weeds’, where ‘I’ ‘have been pulling’ ‘the weeds’, not even of an ‘I’ that has been the subject of the weeding;
- I am on a hiking trip. For the first couple of days, there are many thoughts racing through my mind. Later, I catch myself every now and then realizing that a long period of time has passed without ‘my’ ‘noticing’ ‘anything’ and that ‘I’ am unable to recall anything of the walk. If there has been anything at all, then it was a dim sense of ‘walking’;
- I sit at my desk, writing . . . until I suddenly realize that the morning has passed without that ‘I’ have gotten up once. Although ‘I’ have written more than 6,000 words, ‘I’ ‘have not been aware of’ ‘time’, ‘myself’, or ‘my surroundings’ – though there has been perhaps a dim sense of a process of ‘writing’;
- I fall asleep only to wake up many hours later without ever recalling anything – unless I had woken up or, upon waking up, remember a dream.

All of these experiences share some common features. First, the many quotation marks suggest that our language is ill-suited to the attempt to capture those ‘experiences’, which, as such, are not present to ourselves other than, perhaps, in some ‘dim sense’. The ‘I’ that appears in these descriptions is unable, in the state of absorption, to think ‘I’ in the same way, a person who sleeps or who is dead cannot